



United States Department of Agriculture

**Natural Resources  
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# News Release

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## Public invited to provide input on Clear Branch Dam Rehabilitation

*Public Meeting Aug. 15 in Parkdale, Oregon*

**PARKDALE, Ore.** – (July 22, 2016) — USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is teaming up with the United States Forest Service - Mount Hood National Forest (cooperating agency) and the Middle Fork Irrigation District to begin the planning process for rehabilitating the Clear Branch Dam.

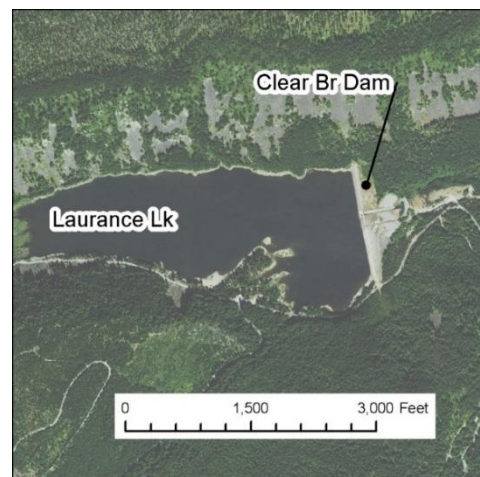
The Clear Branch Dam, located five miles southwest of Parkdale in Hood River County, was built in 1968 and is reaching the end of its 50-year design life. The reservoir that the dam creates, Laurance Lake, provides a clean, dependable water supply and distribution system for up to 8,000 acres of irrigated cropland and supports recreational opportunities.

Thanks to federal funding provided through the 2014 Farm Bill, NRCS is working with the Middle Fork Irrigation District and other stakeholders to rehabilitate the dam to protect critical infrastructure, public health and safety.

To kick-start the planning process, the public is invited to attend an open-house meeting **Aug. 15 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Parkdale Fire Station** (4895 Baseline Drive) in Parkdale, Oregon.

At the meeting, representatives from NRCS and other partners will discuss the natural resource concerns of dam rehabilitation and review conceptual alternatives. Participants will have an opportunity to learn more about the project and express their comments, ideas and concerns.

In addition to providing comments at the public meeting, individuals may also submit comments in writing to NRCS via email, fax or mail. **The deadline to submit comments for the scoping period is Aug. 26.** Written



comments can be emailed to [ron.smith@or.usda.gov](mailto:ron.smith@or.usda.gov), faxed to 855-651-9082, or mailed to: Ronald W. Smith 1201 NE Lloyd Blvd. Ste. 900, Portland, OR 97232.

“NRCS and the Middle Fork Irrigation District recognize this dam is an integral part of the community and provides many benefits to the surrounding area,” said Ron Smith, NRCS state conservation engineer. “We encourage individuals, agencies, tribes, organizations and other groups to share their comments with us during the scoping period so that we can address any concerns or issues throughout the planning process.”

As the lead federal agency for this project, NRCS will develop an Environmental Assessment (EA) that evaluates several alternatives for dam rehabilitation, including a “no action” alternative. The EA will examine potential impacts to the natural and human environment. All comments submitted during the scoping period will be used to develop the EA.

As part of the EA process, NRCS and the Middle Fork Irrigation District plan to conduct a series of studies, investigations, modeling and analyses to assess the current condition of the dam and develop engineering plans.

These engineering plans would detail work needed to bring the dam up to current environmental, engineering, safety, and seismic standards. Throughout this process, NRCS and the District will hold public meetings and coordinate with state, federal, and local agencies and tribes.

For more information about the Clear Branch Dam rehabilitation project or the public participation process, contact Ronald W. Smith, P.E. NRCS state conservation engineer, at 503-414-3252 or [ron.smith@or.usda.gov](mailto:ron.smith@or.usda.gov).

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